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NEWS RELEASE

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Santa Monica Man Guilty of Murdering Two Women, Attempting to Kill Neighbor

A 43-year-old man was found guilty today of the brutal slayings of two women and trying to kill another woman over a seven-year period, the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office announced.

Jurors deliberated for more than three days before finding Michael Gargiulo (dob 2/15/76) guilty of two counts of first-degree murder with the special circumstance allegations of multiple murders and lying in wait, making him eligible for the death penalty. He also was convicted of one count of attempted murder and attempted escape.

The sanity phase of the trial is expected to begin Aug. 20.

Deputy District Attorneys Daniel Akemon and Garrett Dameron are prosecuting the case.

In February 2001, Gargiulo broke into the Hollywood Hills home of 22-year-old Ashley Ellerin and killed her by repeatedly stabbing her.

Gargiulo murdered and mutilated his 32-year-old neighbor Maria Bruno while she was asleep in December 2005. Both had lived in an apartment complex in El Monte, prosecutors said.

Three years later, the defendant attacked Michelle Murphy, 26, in her Santa Monica home and stabbed her. She fought off Gargiulo who was her neighbor and was cut during the struggle. DNA evidence and details of that attack connected him to all three crimes, prosecutors said.

Gargiulo also has been charged in the 1993 slaying of Tricia Pacaccio, 18, in the Chicago area. Prosecutors were able to present details about the murder as supporting evidence during the trial.

Case SA068002 was investigated by the El Monte, Los Angeles and Santa Monica police departments.

About the Los Angeles County District Attorney's Office

Los Angeles County District Attorney Jackie Lacey leads the largest local prosecutorial office in the nation. Her staff of nearly 1,000 attorneys, 300 investigators and 800 support staff members is dedicated to protecting our community through the fair and ethical pursuit of justice and the safeguarding of crime victims' rights.